

THE TEXT OF ALINDA'S SONG 'I AM NOT PROUD' IN JOHN FLETCHER'S *THE PILGRIM*, IV.ii

WHATEVER JOHN FLETCHER'S FAILINGS AS A DRAMATIST, there is general agreement that he was a master of song-writing. It is perplexing, therefore, to see Cyrus Hoy, in his authoritative edition of the play (see vol. VI of *The Dramatic Works in the Beaumont and Fletcher Canon*, gen. ed. Fredson Bowers; Cambridge University Press, 1985), produce the following version of an important song — or at least song-like poem — delivered by the heroine, Alinda, who is disguised as a fool, but very capable of teaching others:

*I am not proud, nor full of wine,
This little Flowre will make me fine:
Cruell in heart, for I shall crie,
If I see a Sparrow dye:
I am not watchfull to doe ill,
Nor glorious to pursue it still:
Nor pittlesse to those that weepe;
Such as are, bid them goe sleep. (IV.ii.40-47)*

The impact of this touching verse on Roderigo, one of the principal characters *who* need to 'learn' during to play, is profound, for he says:

It said true,
I feele it sinke into me forcibly.
Sure 'tis a kind of Sibill, some mad Prophet.
I feel my wildnesse bound, and fetter'd in me. (48-51)

The emotional effect of the song should not, however, allow us to suspend our critical faculty to the extent of not paying close attention to what Alinda's words actually are. And, if these are the words Fletcher imputed to her, we are faced with the oddity that she is made to say that she is 'not proud' (40), but that she *is* 'Cruell in heart' (42), to which she adds the strange 'explanation' that she will cry if she sees a sparrow die.

Obviously, Fletcher must intend that Alinda is *not* cruel, and I would therefore add the word 'Nor' at the beginning of line 42. This seems to me the correct emendation on the following grounds: (1) a negative like 'not' or 'nor' is needed for the poem to make sense; (2) we need a word of one syllable (not more) if the metre is to remain undisturbed (the addition of 'Nor' would simply make 'Cruell' monosyllabic); (3) 'Nor', rather than 'not', is consistent with the handling of negatives in the poem — as in line 40, where 'not' is followed by 'nor'; (4) in transmission, 'Nor' was either simply omitted or left out as a result of the compositor's eye being caught by the word 'for' (instances of this kind of confused anticipation are common in printed texts of the period).

Hoy prints the play from the 1647 Folio of Beaumont and Fletcher's works, in which it was published for the first time. It appears that in that important volume this play, Fletcher's unaided work, was reproduced from the author's foul papers (see Hoy, p.113). The error therefore is likely to have crept in when the play was printed for the Folio: it is hardly plausible that Fletcher himself made it, and there is no scribe to blame. For some reason the emendation which I here propose has not occurred to any of the editors or other readers of the text, but surely that cannot be accepted as it stands, and, as *some* emendation is necessary, I offer 'Nor' as the most attractive

candidate. At the risk of sounding over-ingenious, I would suggest that the parallel created by this emendation, in which one series of negatives 'not . . . nor . . . nor' is followed by another, clinches my case.

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